declared their solidarity with the Supreme Commander, thus offering their swords—if not their armies—to the service of the mutinous general.[10]

After reading the papers, I said to Chkheidze, "All this comes from a madhouse. The movement of the Third Corps is sheer nonsense. Kornilov's troops are phantoms. They will vanish into thin air before the first shot is fired."

THE DEFENSE OF PETROGRAD

Chkheidze asked me to join a Special Commission for the Defense of Petrograd, and once more I stepped onto the old treadmill—telephone calls, messengers, delegations. Some members of the Commission did not share my belief that Kornilov's operation was a "humbug," but we had no disagreement about our defense program: First, to explain to the troops of the rebellious general that they were to be used against the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers and the All-Russian Executive Committee; second, to throw a line of defense around the capital so that the approaching units, should any of them reach this line, would recognize that they must either fight the soldiers and workers of Petrograd or join them. I was convinced that the third phase of the defense—actual fighting on the outskirts of the capital—was improbable.[11] The companions who considered my view

[10] What impressed me most in this episode was the childish stupidity of the operation from a purely military point of view. Kerensky had planned to transform his ephemeral power into a dictatorship with the aid of a cavalry corps. A few days later, the Supreme Commander tried to establish his own dictatorship with the aid of the same corps. Neither of them had any other force for the operation. The firepower of a cavalry corps, however, does not exceed that of an infantry regiment. How could the course of the revolution be changed with such a force? In addition, how could Kerensky or Kornilov be sure that the men thus brought to Petrograd would serve their political schemes? Both, while copying our July strategy, had overlooked the fundamental difference in the situation. Each man in our task force knew what he was asked to do and why, and we had the great majority of the people behind us. In the Kerensky-Kornilov operation everything depended on the blind obedience of a handful of soldiers, against the wishes of the great majority of the people and especially of the army.

[11] Miliukov later described the panic in "the government and the best informed circles" at the news of approaching forces of the Supreme Commander. According to him, these circles considered Kornilov's success certain. Similarly, General Denikin later described the "deadly fear" in the ranks of revolutionary democracy of Petrograd and testified that some members of the government were ready to flee abroad. Most pathetic is Kerensky's testimony: "There was a night when I walked back and forth [in the Winter Palace] almost alone—alone not because I had not wanted to act with other people, but because the psychological climate was such that people thought it was best to keep away from a lost cause." Stankevich, who was close to Kerensky at that time, also reported that a feeling of despair and doom prevailed in the Winter Palace.

I am inclined to accept all this testimony at face value. Some persons in Petro-